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ABSTRACT

The major purpose of this study was to determine from the business community what competencies in the job application process are needed by students preparing to enter the job market for their first full-time position. Data were collected from 100 human resource administrators (out of a sample of 400). The general feeling of the administrators was that students needed preparation for the initial written application material, including the job application letter and resume. They felt that students needed suggestions for advance preparation for the job interview. Specifically, this included proper dress and grooming, knowledge of specific job for which applicant is qualified, and knowledge of the organization at which the applicant is applying. During the job interview, administrators were particularly interested in the applicants' knowledge of their strengths and what contributions they could make to the organization. They agreed that a job interview follow-up letter shows courtesy and that the interviewee is interested in the job. The study instrument is appended. (YLB)

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DESIRED STUDENT PREPARATION IN THE JOB APPLICATION PROCESS AS PERCEIVED BY THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY

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February 1987

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DESIRED STUDENT PREPARATION IN THE JOB APPLICATION PROCESS AS PERCEIVED BY THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Since most human resource representatives note many deficiencies in the manner in which young adults approach the task of applying for a job, we asked them to help us in the preparation of students for the job application process. The recent survey that is being reported on in this study revealed what competencies in the written and oral aspects of the job application process that many human resource personnel in companies in the southeastern United States thought should be stressed in appropriate business courses.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The major purpose of this study is to determine from the business community what competencies in the job application process are needed by students who are preparing to enter the job market for their first full-time position.

Specifically, the objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To determine from the business community, what job application competencies are needed by entering employees.
2. To give human resource personnel an opportunity to evaluate the competencies that are presently being offered in business courses at the secondary, post-secondary and collegiate level.
3. To revise the instruction in the job application process to further stress the competencies that were most emphasized and to include competencies that were not previously covered.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The results of this study will allow teachers who give instruction in competencies of the job application process an opportunity to become familiar with what competencies business students should obtain.

ASSUMPTIONS INVOLVED IN THE STUDY

In designing this study the investigators accepted the Allport position: that when given the opportunity to express one's self, the individual can and will respond in a valid and reliable way (Allport, 1953).

Since the data for this study will not directly affect the future of the respondents, it was assumed that they were not threatened by the questionnaire and that honest answers were elicited.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The following limitations were applicable to this study:

1. The study is limited to one hundred responses from business personnel within the last year in the southeastern United States.
2. The specific conclusions made in this study will be limited to the sample groups, but like conclusions may be drawn to other groups with similar characteristics.

ORGANIZATION OF THE REMAINDER OF THE STUDY

The second chapter contains a review of pertinent literature related to the job application process. The third chapter describes the population used, methods of collecting data, and the organization and analysis of data. Chapter four presents the data and chapter five gives the summary, conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

If job applicants could just stand in line with other qualified job seekers in their occupational field and wait their turn for a job, there would be no need for the present form of the job application process. However, in our free enterprise system there is competition in the labor market for both employers and employees.

According to Getting Jobs, a service publication of MPC Education Publishers, students can gain an extra measure of success insurance by preparing in advance for success at the employment interview. Even when the job is not the right one for the applicant, or when the applicant is not right for the job, the interview can be looked upon as a valuable learning experience rather than a failure. Most important is planning and preparing so that the employment process is approached with confident anticipation instead of dread.

Challenger (1986) notes the following "eight deadly sins" of job interviews.

1. Telling someone how to run his/her business.
2. Criticizing previous employer.
3. Failure to self promote.
4. Volunteering shortcomings.
5. Inquiring about salary and fringe benefits in the first interview.
6. Asking too many questions of the employer.
7. Arriving late for the interview.
8. Dressing improperly.

As is brought out in research by Allen (1970), far too often applicants visit the premise of the prospective employer with the expectation of being interviewed by only one person. It is not at all uncommon to participate in several interviews. Often most of the interviews will be conducted by two or more interviewers. Also on some occasions interviews are conducted with more than one interviewee in attendance.

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

DESCRIPTION OF THE SAMPLE

Participants in the survey were obtained from the 1986 Membership Directory of the American Society of Personnel Administrators. Four hundred questionnaires were sent to a random group of personnel administrators, mostly in the southeastern United States. One hundred (100) administrators returned the questionnaire for a response rate of 25 percent.

INSTRUMENTATION

The instrument used to gather data in the survey was the "Desired Student Preparation in the Job Application Process as Perceived by the Business Community" questionnaire (see Appendix). Information requested on the questionnaire included the following areas: description of the company which the human resource director represents; initial written application material; preparation for the job interview; responses during the interview; and interview follow-up.

PROCEDURE

The questionnaires were distributed by mail to human resource administrators in corporations in the southeastern United States. A cover letter explaining the purpose of the study and need for a response was enclosed along with a self-addressed, business reply envelope. The questionnaires were completed during the latter part of the fall semester of 1986. A completion time of approximately one month was allowed for the return of the questionnaires.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The results were determined by the analysis of the questionnaire. A summary of the data results from the questionnaire is shown as follows:

Human resource administrators from 100 companies completed and returned the questionnaire. The following results are based on the fact that 100 responses are equal to 100 percent.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. Title of person completing the questionnaire:

Human Resources Manager	19
Personnel Manager	18
Director of Personnel	10
Personnel Administrator	6
Director of Employee Relations	5
Director of Human Resources	5
Human Resource Specialist	3
Personnel Administration Manager	3
Vice President	2
Assistant Manager of Human Resources	2
Vice President of Human Resources	2
Human Resources Assistant	2
Employment Manager	2
Marketing Coordinator	2
Comptroller	1
Vice President of Personnel	1
Executive Director of Employment	1
Manager of Personnel Services	1
Training and Recruiting Manager	1

2. Size of the company by number of employees:

0-- 500	32	5,001--10,000	15
501--1000	19	Over 10,000	18
1001--2000	10		
2001--3000	12		
3001--5000	4		

3. Size of company by annual gross sales in $000:

$ 000-- $ 250	1	$ 5,001--$ 10,000	3
251-- 500	1	10,001-- 25,000	5
501-- 1,000	3	25,001-- 50,000	5
1,001-- 2,000	1	50,001-- 100,000	8
2,001-- 5,000	2	Over 100,000	52

4. Type of company:

manufacturing	41
merchandising	8
service	35
financial	18
local government	1

5. Location of company headquarters:

Virginia	25
North Carolina	22
Georgia	18
South Carolina	16
Illinois	4
Tennessee	3
Massachusetts	2
Washington, DC	1
Texas	1
Indiana	1
Kentucky	1
Florida	1
Connecticut	1
Japan	1
Canada	1

REPORT BODY

(Based on Questionnaire Format and Responses)

1. INITIAL WRITTEN APPLICATION MATERIAL ON A SCALE OF 0-5

("0" = cannot rank; "5" = very important to include)
The sample population gave an overall ranking of importance of the following:

A. The Job Application Letter	3.8
B. The Resume	4.4

Suggestions: Letters of application and resumes should be neat, error free and one page in length.

Letter should be short, concise and state reason for writing.

Letter and resume should be in the form of a proposal for the job.

Letter and resume represent a first impression; therefore they should be neat, complete and to the point, as to what one is applying for and why he/she is qualified.

2. PREPARATION FOR JOB INTERVIEW

A. Proper Dress and Grooming	4.0
B. Knowledge of Specific Job for Which Applicant is Qualified	3.8
C. Specific Job Area for Which to Apply	3.5
D. Knowledge of Organization at Which the Applicant is Applying	3.7
E. Knowledge of What Information Applicant Must Obtain in Order to Make Decision	3.6
1. Rules and regulations of the organization	3.2
2. Duties of the job	4.0
3. Location of the job	3.2
4. Travel expected	3.2
5. Chance of advancement	3.4
6. Monetary benefits	3.4
7. Training	3.4

Suggestions: Proper dress and grooming shows the employer what the prospect will look like to his public and customers.

Applicants should show enough interest in the interview to find out as much as possible in advance about the company because there is no way that a prospective employee can know whether he can make a contribution to an organization if he knows nothing about its operation.

Location, travel and other details are not essential since they can change so rapidly.

3. RESPONSES DURING THE INTERVIEW

A. What Contribution Applicant Can Make to the Organization	3.5
B. Applicant's Strengths	4.2
C. Applicant's Weaknesses	3.8
D. Clarification of Preparation	3.5
E. Justification of Why Organization Should Hire Applicant	4.2

Suggestions: Applicant should be able to give a good explanation of why he/she is applying for this job at this particular time.

Applicant should know why he/she is qualified for the job and be able to tell the employer why he should select him rather than another applicant.

Most employers are more interested in the potential of an applicant rather than his/her immediate contribution.

Make applicants aware of how to approach weaknesses as if they were strengths, i.e., "I have a tendency to be a perfectionist because I want to perform my job to the best of my ability."

4. INTERVIEW FOLLOW-UP

A. Job Interview Follow-up Letter	4.0
B. Letter of Acceptance	3.2
C. Letter of Refusal	3.1
D. Preparation for a Return Interview	3.8

Suggestions: Follow-up or thank you letters are indeed rare, but give a positive impression.

Follow-up letters may give an applicant a slight advantage over an equal applicant who does not bother to follow-up.

If an applicant is not interested in a job offer, a letter of refusal is the polite thing to do. Employers also need to know what decision the prospective employee has made.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SUMMARY

PURPOSE

The primary purpose of this study is to identify and analyze the competencies in the job application process that human resource administrators feel should be taught in business classes.

POPULATION AND INSTRUMENTATION

The data was collected from human resource administrators in the directory of the American Society of Personnel Administrators in the United States through a questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed and administered during the fall of 1986 after being developed and field tested by the researcher. A cover letter explaining the purpose of the study and the need for a response was enclosed along with a self-addressed business reply envelope. A completion time of approximately one month was requested of the respondents for the return of the questionnaire.

DATA COLLECTION

The questionnaires were completed by the human resource administrators. When completed, the questionnaires were returned to the researcher.

CONCLUSIONS

Human resource administrators' reactions to the proposed content to be offered in preparation for the job application process reveal the following observations:

1. It was the general feeling of the human resource administrators that students need preparation for the initial written application material, including the job application letter and resume.

2. The human resource administrators felt that students need suggestions for advance preparation for the job interview. Specifically, this includes proper dress and grooming, knowledge of specific job for which applicant is qualified, and knowledge of the organization at which the applicant is applying. In addition, the applicant must be prepared to obtain all information needed in order to judge a situation, should an offer be extended.

3. During the job interview the human resource administrators were particularly interested in the applicants' knowledge of their strengths and what contributions they could make to the organization.

4. The human resource administrators agreed that a job interview follow-up letter shows courtesy and that the interviewee is interested in the job.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Several implications are believed to be of importance in the making of recommendations of competencies to be stressed in a study of the job application process. The following most frequently given recommendations of course content offerings are based upon results of this study:

1. Students should receive instruction in how to write a short specific job applicant letter and resume; how to market themselves.

2. Students should properly prepare for attendance at the job application interview. Proper preparation includes the following: appropriate dress and grooming, what job area for which he/she is applying, information about the job and the organization.

3. Students should know how to respond during the interview. This response includes the following: keeping their composure and not appearing to be someone else, knowing their strengths and what contributions they can make to the organization, and justifying why the organization should hire them instead of someone else.

4. Students should be made aware of appropriate follow-up action after the interview. Steps in follow-up include: writing a follow-up letter after the interview, promptly writing either a letter of acceptance or refusal to make the prospective employer aware of their decision after the job offer is extended.

APPENDICES

Department of Management

Appalachian State University
Boone, North Carolina 28608

704/262-2163

November 15, 1986

Dear Human Resource Administrator:

WE NEED YOUR HELP!!!

We are conducting a major national research project to determine what business executives, like yourself, want from today's college graduates. This study specifically addresses the preparatory work in the job application process and abilities of college graduates in business. Surely we cannot determine this information solely from our positions as college professors; it requires the joint efforts of both business personnel and college faculty.

Consequently, we are seeking your valued opinion and ideas to help us meet YOUR NEEDS as you hire your future personnel from the vast pool of business school graduates. In the questionnaire, on the following two pages, we have identified various topics and subtopics which are typically taught in many business courses in colleges and universities throughout the country. We, therefore, would like your input on the value and importance of teaching the items shown. Also, we have provided space for YOUR VALUED COMMENTS as you see fit to respond.

For further help when analyzing our collected data we are also requesting of you certain descriptive data about your company which we hope you will provide. If you feel the data is confidential or privileged, we will understand if you cannot provide.

Would you please take a few minutes to complete the questionnaire and return to us in the enclosed envelope. If at all possible, would you please try to return the completed questionnaire by December 15, 1986. If you are unable to complete the questionnaire yourself, please ask another qualified person to do so. Thank you very much for helping us bridge the gap between business and education. PLEASE SHARE YOUR KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERTISE WITH US; IT WILL BE VERY HELPFUL TO YOU, THE STUDENTS, AND TO THOSE OF US WHO ARE TEACHING.

Sincerely,

Thomas R. Allen, Jr.

Thomas R. Allen, Jr.
Professor of Management

DESIRED STUDENT PREPARATION IN THE JOB APPLICATION PROCESS AS PERCEIVED BY THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY

DIRECTIONS: Please respond to the following demographic data as best you can regarding yourself and your organization.

1. **Title of person completing this questionnaire:** _____

2. **Size of the company:**

_____ 0-500 employees
_____ 501-1,000 employees
_____ 1,001-2,000 employees
_____ 2,001-3,000 employees
_____ 3,001-5,000 employees
_____ 5,001-10,000 employees
_____ Over 10,000 employees

3. **Size of company by annual gross sales (in thousands):**

_____ $000-$250
_____ 251- 500
_____ 501-1,000
_____ 1,001-2,000
_____ 2,001-5,000
_____ $5,001-$10,000
_____ 10,001-25,000
_____ 25,001-50,000
_____ 50,001-100,000
_____ Over 100,000

4. **Check type of company:**

_____ Manufacturing
_____ Merchandising
_____ Service
_____ Financial

5. **Location of company headquarters:**

State: _____ City: _____

DIRECTIONS FOR JOB APPLICATION TOPICS: As you evaluate the outline below, rank the topics by circling the appropriate number according to the degree of instructional emphasis that you feel should be given to each. The ranking classifications are as follows:

0 -- Cannot rank with data shown
1 -- Instruction not needed
2 -- Include, but with limited coverage of topic
3 -- Should include with general overall coverage of topic
4 -- Important to include with some special instructional coverage of topic
5 -- Very important to include with specific instructional emphasis given to topic

	RANKINGS					
	5	4	3	2	1	0
I. INITIAL WRITTEN APPLICATION MATERIAL						
A. The Job Application Letter	5	4	3	2	1	0
B. The Resume	5	4	3	2	1	0

Comments and/or Suggestions: _____

_____

_____

_____

II. PREPARATION FOR JOB INTERVIEW

A. Proper Dress and Grooming	5	4	3	2	1	0
B. Knowledge of Specific Job for Which Applicant Is Qualified	5	4	3	2	1	0
C. Specific Job Area for Which to Apply	5	4	3	2	1	0
D. Knowledge of the Organization for Which the Applicant Is Applying	5	4	3	2	1	0
E. Knowledge of What Information Applicant Must Obtain in Order to Make a Decision	5	4	3	2	1	0
1. Rules and regulations of the organization	5	4	3	2	1	0
2. Duties of the job	5	4	3	2	1	0
3. Location of the job	5	4	3	2	1	0
4. Travel expected	5	4	3	2	1	0
5. Chance for advancement	5	4	3	2	1	0
6. Monetary benefits	5	4	3	2	1	0
7. Training	5	4	3	2	1	0

Comments and/or Suggestions: _____

_____

_____

_____

III. RESPONSES DURING THE INTERVIEW

A. What Contributions Applicant Can Make to the Organization	5	4	3	2	1	0
B. Applicant's Strengths	5	4	3	2	1	0
C. Applicant's Weaknesses	5	4	3	2	1	0
D. Clarification of Preparation	5	4	3	2	1	0
E. Justification of Why Organization Should Hire Applicant	5	4	3	2	1	0

Comments and/or Suggestions: _____

_____

_____

_____

IV. INTERVIEW FOLLOW-UP

A. Job Interview Follow-up Letter	5	4	3	2	1	0
B. Letter of Acceptance	5	4	3	2	1	0
C. Letter of Refusal	5	4	3	2	1	0
D. Preparation for a Return Interview	5	4	3	2	1	0

Comments and/or Suggestions: _____

_____

_____

_____